

22. (Amended) The medium of claim 21, wherein the instructions further perform the step of:
storing the received information in one of the gatekeepers.

REMARKS

Claims 1-30 are pending in the application. Claims 1, 2, 11, 12, 21 and 22 have been amended by the foregoing amendment. In the Office Action of August 12, 2002, claims 2, 12 and 22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, 2nd paragraph, for being unclear as to which of the gatekeepers is storing the received information. It is submitted that this rejection is overcome by the foregoing amendment and therefore, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 3-7, 11, 13-17, 21 and 23-27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,128,304 (Gardell et al.). Claims 2, 9, 10, 12, 19, 20, 22, 29 and 30 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gardell et al. Claims 8, 18 and 28 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Gardell in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,426,945 B1 (Sengodan).

Applicant respectfully request withdrawal of these rejections for the following reasons.

Applicants' invention is directed to communication between gatekeepers in a hierarchical or hybrid architecture. A hybrid architecture may be a combination of distributed and hierarchical architecture for example. As recited in claim 1 for example, a method of communication in a system employing a plurality of gatekeepers is

disclosed. The method comprises receiving a request for information at a first gatekeeper and determining whether the information is known by the first gatekeeper. If the information is not known at the first gatekeeper, the request is sent to a second gatekeeper via an intermediate gatekeeper. The requested information is received from the second gatekeeper via the intermediate gatekeeper. The first gatekeeper is at a different hierarchical level than the intermediate gatekeeper. As described by Applicant, the first gatekeeper determines whether it has the requested information. If the information is not available at the first gatekeeper, the first gatekeeper sends the request to a second gatekeeper (Specification, p. 4; lines 25-28 and p. 6, lines 7-11). The requested information is received by the first gatekeeper.

Gardell describes a system in which a communication signal to a called party is routed to (alternate) service nodes if the called party is unavailable (col. 2, l. 63 to col. 3, l. 3). In contrast to Applicant's invention, however, the first gatekeeper of Gardell (Fig. 4, gatekeeper 54) always forwards the request to a plurality of gatekeepers (col. 8, lines 25-30 and lines 53-58).

In Applicant's invention, a request for information received at the first gatekeeper is sent to a second gatekeeper if the information is not available at the first gatekeeper. The first gatekeeper initially determines whether the requested information is available at the first gatekeeper prior to sending the request to a second gatekeeper. The first gatekeeper of Gardell does not determine whether requested information is available at the first gatekeeper prior to sending requests to a second gatekeeper. Gardell therefore

fails to disclose Applicant's invention as claimed.

Gardell also fails to disclose a first gatekeeper sending the request for information via an intermediate gatekeeper to a second gatekeeper if the information is not known by the first gatekeeper as recited in amended claim 1 of Applicant's invention. Furthermore, Gardell fails to disclose the first gatekeeper and the intermediate gatekeeper being at different hierarchical levels. The hierarchical levels of Applicant's invention facilitate hybrid network architecture that combines both distributed and hierarchical gatekeepers (Specification, p. 6, l. 20 to p. 7, l. 26 and Figs. 3 and 4).

At least for these reasons, it is believed that amended claims 1, 11 and 21 of Applicant's invention are patentable over the teachings of Gardell. Claims 3-7, 13-17 and 23-27 all depend on one of claims 1, 11 and 21 and also patentable. Similarly, dependent claims 2, 9, 10, 12, 19, 20, 22, 29 and 30 are also patentable over the teachings of Gardell.

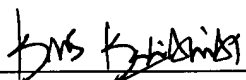
With respect to dependent claims 8, 18 and 28, the deficiencies of Gardell as highlighted above are not overcome by Sengodan as Sengodan also fails to disclose, among other features, a first gatekeeper sending the request for information via an intermediate gatekeeper to a second gatekeeper if the information is not known by the first gatekeeper and different hierarchical levels. Therefore, claims 8, 18 and 28 are patentable over the Gardell/Sengodan combination.

All of the rejections being overcome, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance and a notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner have any questions with respect to expediting the prosecution of this application, he is urged to contact the undersigned at the number listed below.

A fee is enclosed for the Petition for extension of time. The Commissioner is authorized to charge any additional fees necessary to Deposit Account No. 50-2476.

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Attachment Showing Claim Amendments

Claims 1, 2, 11, 12, 21 and 22 have been amended as follows:

1. (Amended) A method for communication employing a plurality of gatekeepers, the method comprising the steps of:
 - [(a)] receiving a request for information at a first gatekeeper [a request for information];
 - [(b)] determining whether the information is known by the first gatekeeper;
 - [(c)] sending the request via at least one intermediate gatekeeper to a second gatekeeper if the information is not known by the first gatekeeper[, sending the request via a gatekeeper-level path to a second gatekeeper]; and
 - [(d)] receiving the requested information from the second gatekeeper[, via the at least one intermediate gatekeeper wherein a hierarchical level associated with said first gatekeeper is different from a hierarchical level associated with said intermediate gatekeeper [gatekeeper-level path, the requested information].
2. (Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of:
 - [(e)] storing the received information in at least one of the first, intermediate and second gatekeepers.

11. (Amended) An apparatus for communication, the apparatus comprising:
- [(a)] a processor; and
 - [(b)] a memory coupled to said processor, said memory storing instructions adapted to be executed by said processor[, the instructions comprising] for performing the steps of:
 - [(i)] receiving [at a first gatekeeper] a request for information at a first gatekeeper;
 - [(ii)] determining whether the information is known by the first gatekeeper;
 - [(iii)] sending the request via an intermediate gatekeeper to a second gatekeeper if the information is not known by the first gatekeeper
[, sending the request via a gatekeeper-level path to a second gatekeeper]; and
 - [(iv)] receiving the requested information from the second gatekeeper[,]
via the [gatekeeper-level path, the requested information]
intermediate gatekeeper wherein a hierarchical level associated with said first gatekeeper is different from a hierarchical level associated with said intermediate gatekeeper.
12. (Amended) The apparatus of claim 11, [said memory storing further instructions adapted to be run on said processor, said further instructions comprising]

wherein the instructions further perform the step of:

[(v)] storing the received information in at least one of the gatekeepers.

21. (Amended) A medium for communications, the communication using a plurality of gatekeepers at different hierarchical levels, said medium storing instructions adapted to be executed by a processor[, the instructions comprising] for performing the steps of:

[(a)] receiving [at a first gatekeeper] a request for information at a first gatekeeper;

[(b)] determining whether the information is known by the first gatekeeper;

[(c)] sending the request via an intermediate gatekeeper to a second gatekeeper if the information is not known by the first gatekeeper[, sending the request via a gatekeeper-level path to a second gatekeeper]; and

[(d)] receiving the requested information from the second gatekeeper[, via the intermediate gatekeeper [gatekeeper-level path, the requested information] wherein the first gatekeeper and the intermediate gatekeeper are at different hierarchical levels.

22. (Amended) The medium of claim 21, wherein the instructions further perform the step of [storing further information adapted to be executed by a processor, the further information comprising]: [(e)] storing the received information in one of the gatekeepers.